

5
Cdr. T. AHD
Jov

SANITIZED COPY

Aug 18

TO : DIR - Mr. Kohler

FROM : DIR - Thomas L. Hughes *THH*

*Ident to Sec. P.
Week-end of 8/19*

SUBJECT : Soviet Reaction to Reinforcement of Allied Garrison in
West Berlin Over the Autobahn

Soviet Behavior at Helmsdorf Checkpoint

We estimate that the Soviet authorities will, after some delay, occasioned in large part by communication with higher decision-making levels in East Berlin and possibly Moscow, allow the designated Allied reinforcements to proceed over the autobahn to West Berlin.

The Soviets will be reluctant to see the Western move take place. While it represents no serious military threat to them, it is a token show of force which will have important political effects both in Berlin and on the international scene generally. It will be a reassuring symbol of Western resolve not to be intimidated by Soviet threats from exercise of legitimate Western rights, will raise Western prestige and morale, may well outweigh the Western psychological setback represented by the communist closure of the West Berlin border last week, and may have deleterious consequences for the recent communist encroachment in East Berlin.

Despite these possible adverse consequences for the Soviets of tolerating the Western move, we nevertheless believe it will be tolerated for the following reasons, and on the following conditions. If the West makes a firm display of its resolve to exercise its access right (a display not only by the reinforcements at Helmsdorf but by other backup measures designed to overcome any resistance or delays that may be offered), the Soviets will be placed in the position of a ~~lose-or-lose~~ ^{lose-or-lose} or will see a showdown of force which, for all their tough talk, they have wanted to avoid. Furthermore, they will not have the flimsy legal pretext of a peace treaty to justify their resistance, and even will be acting in defiance of their self-recognized obligations.

The Allied powers will be utilizing their basic right of free access to West Berlin for the maintenance and/or reinforcement of their garrisons

SANITIZED

E.O. 12366, Sec. 3.4

NHK-90-27

SCF

NARA, Date 12/31/90

whose size is not limited by any statutory regulation. Not only have the Soviets not challenged this right in principle since 1949, but the James Rest statement of August 13 sealing the borders of West Berlin to the refugee flow emphasized that such rights were not to be affected by the action taken. The contemplated move is thus clearly within the Soviet-recognized rights of the Western powers and thus puts Moscow at a disadvantage on a legalistic basis.

The appearance at Helmsstedt of such a sizeable force for autobahn transit to Berlin may occasion Soviet indecision at the checkpoint and a consequent unwillingness immediately to permit its transit without reference to higher authority. Thus, if the Soviets have not issued appropriate contingency orders, a delay of a few hours while Helmsstedt refers to Berlin, and Berlin refers possibly to Moscow, for consideration by higher authorities of the factors involved, is to be expected. The Soviets could use any number of pretexts, as they have in the past, in the hope of delaying the reinforcement. To the degree that the Allied forces manifest any lack of determination to proceed, the Soviets will attempt to prolong the delay. The longer the delay, the weaker the Allied position becomes vis-a-vis the Soviets, the greater the Soviet incentive and opportunity to ultimately block the move, and the more disastrous the setback for the West.

Thus while we cannot exclude the possibility that the Soviets will delay or in effect deny access on technical pretexts, we believe that with a firm display of determination to proceed the Allied force will be allowed to pass and with a minimum of delay. But as a demonstrative measure, the Soviets may deploy troops near the access routes in connection with the dispatch of Allied reinforcements.

Possible Soviet Countermeasures in Berlin

Most probably, the Soviets will prefer to allow the garrison increase to pass without direct counteraction in Berlin.

The heightening of local tension in the wake of the garrison reinforcement will limit Soviet room for action on the Berlin scene for the immediate future. The Soviets will probably estimate that once tension has been reduced, they can more safely begin a pattern of minor harassments with the East Germans still technically in control in East Berlin. But if they choose to cut at all, harassment or even halting of Allied access to

East Berlin will become increasingly attractive to them.

The Allied move on the Berlin scene may possibly have considerable influence on the morale of the East German armed forces on the sector border. These will probably reflect a growing nervousness, but mass defections are not to be expected. Simultaneously the East German population may tend to be less willing to cooperate with regime demands. This reaction is not likely to become evident immediately, but if our posture and initiative are maintained, it will take on significance.

Propaganda-Political Reaction

Soviet political propaganda will immediately take the line that the Western action is a provocation which threatens world peace and underscores the urgent need for a prompt settlement of the Berlin question. At the same time, propaganda stressing the might of the communist bloc and its firmness in meeting the challenge can be expected.

Whether in a UN debate, published notes to the Western powers, bilateral approaches to neutrals or some other vehicle, the Soviets will appeal to neutralist public opinion by arguing that the move is evidence of Western aggressiveness. In addition to claiming that it proves their contention that a peaceful settlement of the Berlin question brooks no delay, they may, if they wish to broaden the scope of the question, give new emphasis to their nearly dormant proposals for European security arrangements (troop withdrawals, the Rapacki Plan, a European zone for arms control and prevention of surprise attack, and a NATO-Warsaw Pact non-aggression treaty).

Simultaneously, the Soviets will step up propaganda on Soviet and bloc military strength and their firmness in meeting this new challenge to peace, perhaps publicizing their deployment of missiles in East Germany, a new troop deployment, a new Warsaw Pact decision, or some other demonstrative show of force for this purpose.

Doubtless, the increase in tension following the move will increase fear of war among the Soviet population. However, it is not likely to do so to an extent which will seriously affect Soviet policy.
